

English History and Family History Research

Craig L. Foster, Research Specialist, AG®

FamilySearch
FosterCL@FamilySearch.org

1066 - 1714

- 1066 The Battle of Hastings.
- 1086 A census is taken resulting in the Domesday Book.
- 1215 The Magna Carta is signed by King John at Runnymede, near Windsor
- 1455-1485 The Wars of the Roses.
- 1531 Henry VIII is recognized as the head of the newly created Church of England. All ties with the Catholic Church are severed.
- 1535-1536 England and Wales are united politically.
- 1538 Thomas Cromwell orders all parish ministers to keep records of christenings, marriages, and burials.
- 1559 From this date, various acts were passed by Parliament excluding Roman Catholics from government positions and fined them for not attending the Church of England.
- 1568 The Puritan movement splits in two - Presbyterians and the Separatists.
- 1606 Parliament passes a law requiring Roman Catholics to be baptized and married by Church of England clergy and to be buried in Church of England churchyards.
- 1642-1660 The English Civil War was a time of great social upheaval.
- 1656 Society of Friends records begin.
- 1660 Charles II is restored as monarch, bringing peace and also the Bishop's courts are restored.
- 1685 Increased migration of French Huguenot refugees to England.
- 1695-1706 A tax assessment of parish register entries caused a number of people to not register events in order to avoid paying the tax.
- 1707 England and Wales are united with Scotland to create the United Kingdom.

1715-1939

- 1721 Robert Walpole becomes the first Prime Minister of Great Britain.
- 1752 England adopts the Gregorian Calendar. The first day of the year is changed from 25 March (Lady Day) to 1 January.
- 1754 Lord Hardwicke's Act outlawed marriages outside of the Church of England (except for Jews and Quakers) and required Non-Conformists and others to be married in the Church of England.
Irregular marriages and common law marriages were outlawed. Separate marriage records were required to be kept.

1756-1762	The Seven Years War (French and Indian War in North America) began a continuous series of military records now stored at the National Archives.
1775-1783	The American Revolution.
1778	The laws against the Roman Catholic Church are repealed and Catholic priests begin keeping records.
1783-1794	The Stamp Duty Act again assessed a tax on parish register entries. Only paupers were exempt, so people who were not paupers claimed to be. Others did not have their children baptized until after the act had been repealed.
1800	Acts of Union of 1800 Ireland became part of the United Kingdom beginning in 1801.
1812	The George Rose Act required the Church of England christening, marriage, and burial records to be kept in separate registers using preprinted forms. The act went into effect 1 January 1813.
1834	Poor law unions were created, taking poor relief responsibilities away from parishes. Workhouses were established.
1837	Victoria is crowned Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in June.
1837	Civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths begins on 1 July.
1841	The first census of genealogical value was taken, and every ten years thereafter.
1853-1856	The Crimean War between Russian and British alliance.
1858	The Principal Probate Registry began handling all English probates.
1870	The Education Act of 1870 introduced universal education. This was followed up in 1880 with the Elementary Education Act of 1880 which made primary schooling compulsory and also opened up schooling to girls.
1899-1902	The Boer War fought between the British and two Boer states, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, resulted in a decisive British victory and control of South Africa.
1901	Queen Victoria died on January 22, in Osborne, East Cowes, Isle of Wight, United Kingdom.
1908	Parliament approves old age pensions.
1914	World War begins. Great Britain declared war on Austria-Hungary, Germany and then the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria.
1918	Women finally get the vote with the Representation of the People Act of 1918. Women over age thirty who meet the prescribed qualifications are able to vote.
1918	World War I ends on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.
1928	Women receive the right to vote on the same terms as men with the Representation of the People Act.
1936	King George V dies and King Edward VIII ascends to the throne in January. In December, Edward VIII abdicates the throne over his desire to marry American divorcée Wallis Simpson. George VI ascends to the throne.
1939	England and Wales Register in preparation for war with Germany.

Rulers of England, 1066 to the Present

William I "The Conqueror"

William II — son of William I

Henry I "Beauclerc" — son of William I

Stephen — grandson of William I

Henry II "Curtmantle" — great-grandson of William I, son of Matilda

Richard I — son of Henry II
John “Lackland” — son of Henry II
Henry III — son of John
Edward I — son of Henry III
Edward II — son of Edward I
Edward III — son of Edward II
Richard II — grandson of Edward III, son of Edward “The Black Prince”
Henry IV — grandson of Edward III, son of John of Gaunt
Henry V — son of Henry IV
Henry VI — son of Henry V
Edward IV — great-grandson of John of Gaunt, great-great-grandson of Edward III
Edward V — son of Edward IV
Richard III — younger brother of Edward IV
Henry VII — 4th great-grandson of Edward I; he married Elizabeth York, daughter of Edward IV
Henry VIII — son of Henry VII
Edward VI — son of Henry VIII
Mary I — daughter of Henry VIII
Elizabeth I — daughter of Henry VIII
James I — great-great-grandson of Henry VII
Charles I — son of James I
Charles II — son of Charles I
James II — son of Charles I
Mary II and William III — daughter of James II; husband of Mary II and grandson of Charles I
Anne — daughter of James II
George I — Great-grandson of James I
George II — son of George I
George III — son of Frederick Louis Hanover, grandson of George II
George IV — son of George III
William IV — brother of George IV, son of George III
Victoria — daughter of Edward Hanover, granddaughter of George III
Edward VII — son of Queen Victoria
George V — son of Edward VII
Edward VIII — son of George V
George VI — brother of Edward VIII, son of George V
Elizabeth II — daughter of George VI